

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION & THE ROLE OF THE HUMANITIES

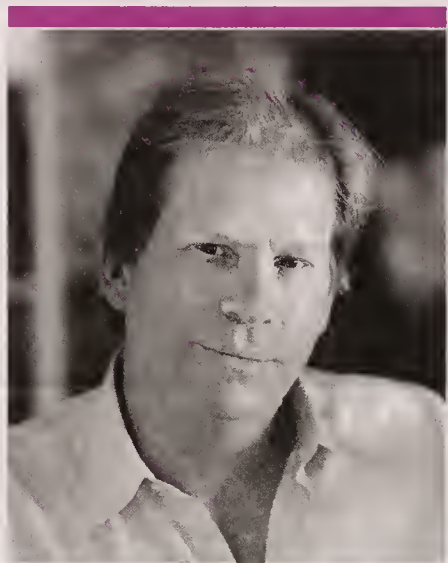
by David Rosen
Managing Director, Praxis

Editor's Note: David Rosen, one of the participants in the Council's recent "Humanities and the New Media Conference," is the first contributor in an occasional series of articles and essays exploring the relationship between the humanities and technology.

Rosen is managing director of Praxis, a San Francisco-based media consulting firm. He was formerly Commodore's international marketing director and is the author of *Off-Hollywood: The Making and Marketing of Independent Films*, which was commissioned by Robert Redford's Sundance Institute. His television credits include the six-hour ABC miniseries, "The Trial of Lee Harvey Oswald" and the Emmy award-winning PBS series, "The American City."

For more on the "Humanities and the New Media Conference," please see pages 4 and 5 in this issue.

Not since the early 1960s, when President Kennedy launched the nation into a "space race" as part of the then-escalating Cold War, has the U.S. been so captivated by high technology. Today, the print and television media celebrate marvels of technology in their almost daily "gee-whiz" stories covering the latest scientific breakthroughs, the visual wonders of "Jurassic Park" and the reporting on the new products and services that increasingly define our lives. Vice President Gore has focused national attention on the promises of technology by championing the "information superhighway," the National Information Infrastructure, thus placing it on the national agenda as



David Rosen

the linchpin for 21st century U.S. industrial and communications policy.

The renewed popular discussion of technology provides a unique – and critically important – opportunity for humanists to offer a much-needed historical and social perspective. This perspective can help redress the dominant celebratory attitude toward technology, an attitude which seems to have seduced much of the media. The captivation with technology has become a way to add luster to a fading belief in progress, the last frontier of a post-Cold War America lacking both vision and purpose. It is informed by a common assumption that technology, like science, is a "neutral" endeavor, independent of social relations and, therefore, of social accountability.

This outlook conceives technology as something, like nature,

Humanists can anchor the discussion of technology in a perspective that neither denies nor fictionalizes its past.

objectively given and immutable. It envisions our technologically mediated world, and especially the vast matrix of electronic culture, as essentially a second nature, an ether enveloping all people in a shared experience. Technology is represented as the logical or natural outcome of basic scientific research, following the ostensibly "objective" laws of science rather than arising out of the complex economic and social activities of humans.

This perspective fosters a real ignorance of how innovation actually takes place, especially in large government and corporate research and development labs, from which most of the major developments of this century have come. Nothing better illustrates this than the transition now under way from the older analog media of radio, television and telephony to the newer digital media of computing and interactive multimedia.

Today's popular compact disc and CD-ROM, for example, are not just the results of a half-century's painstaking efforts in computing which began with the first huge ENIAC machine with its 18,000 vacuum tubes, or of the economic fact that digital processing of an electronic signal is simply cheaper and more efficient than analog methods of information dissemination. They are also the result of a deal struck between Sony and Philips in the late 1970s to establish the format, to create a *de facto* industry standard that would replace analog record and tape formats. Why, you might ask, does the CD hold 74 minutes of audio? Because Sony's chairman, Akio Morita, insisted that it contain the entire Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony," a traditional Japanese holiday favorite.

Unfortunately, the dominant celebratory view of technology conflates human, social developments into quasi-natural occurrences, rendering *purposeful* actions, the actions resulting from specific human decisions, into *purposeless*

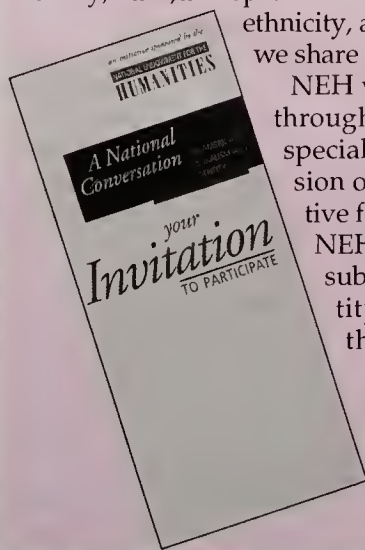
Continued on page six.

A NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON AMERICAN PLURALISM AND IDENTITY

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) is inviting all Americans to join in a conversation, informed by scholarship, about the nature of American pluralism and identity. This conversation is an opportunity for Americans of all backgrounds to study, learn, and speak face-to-face about our differences – of race, ethnicity, and culture – as well as about the values we share as Americans.

NEH will encourage this conversation through a variety of means. These include a special competition for grants from the division of public programs, an NEH-wide initiative for proposals for regular grants from all NEH divisions for activities focusing on the subject of American pluralism and identity, and ongoing and new activities of the state humanities councils.

For information about how you can join the conversation, telephone the National Endowment for the Humanities at 1-800/NEH-1121.



In this issue

"Journey of the Frolic: Many Cultures Represented in Shipwreck Project" page 2

An excerpt from a series of newspaper articles that tell the story of an 1850 shipwreck along the Mendocino coast – and the story of the exhibits that examine the significance of that shipwreck.

"Humanities and the New Media Conference" page 4

In early June, CCH conducted three workshops to educate itself about the new media. Here are some snippets of what we heard.

"The Flesh" and "The Devil" page 6

The second and third parts of a discussion among scientists, humanists and science fiction writers take place in November (see *Humanities Calendar*).

New Benefits for Friends of the Humanities page 7

The California Council for the Humanities is a state-based affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The *Humanities Network* is published quarterly and mailed to anyone who requests it from the San Francisco office.

“JOURNEY OF THE FROLIC” – MANY CULTURES ARE REPRESENTED IN

In complementary exhibits in Mendocino, Willits and Ukiah through December 31, The “Journey of the Frolic” project explores how an 1850 shipwreck on the Mendocino coast affected the transformation of the region into a complex, integrated, multicultural society.

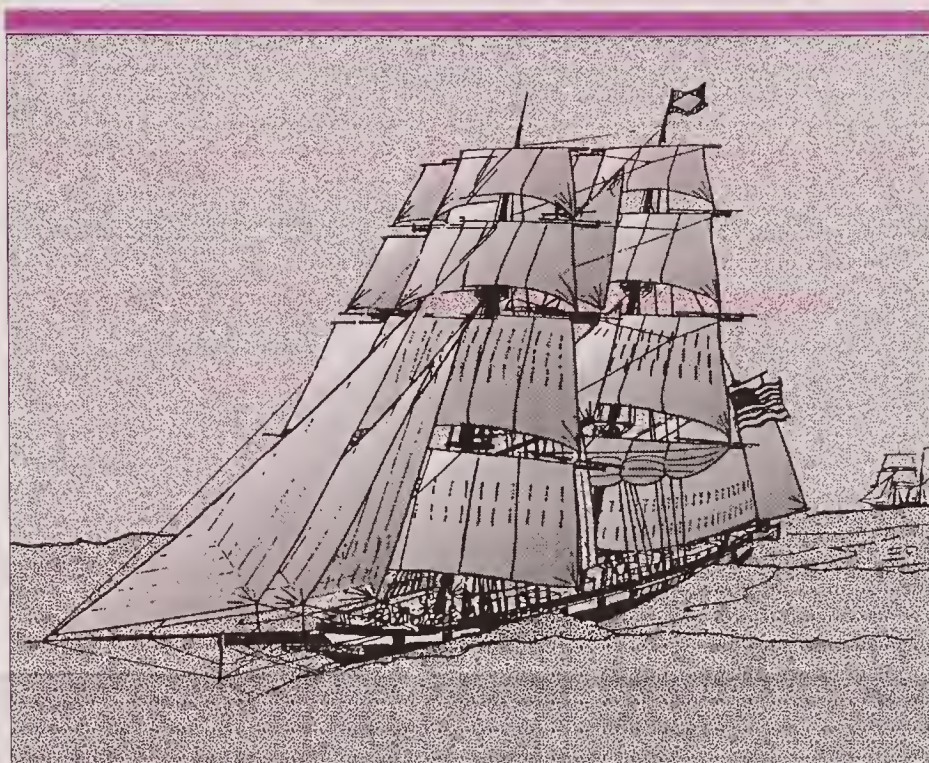
The following article is adapted from the fourth in a series of seven newspaper articles written about the project by Mark Rawitsch. Rawitsch directs community extension for Mendocino College. Community extension produced the newspaper series. The entire series is now available in a single volume called *Journey of the Frolic: The Story of the Story* published by the Mendocino County Museum (400 East Commercial Street, Willits, CA 95490).

When maritime explorers from Europe first “discovered” a world already known for thousands of years by members of its native cultures, they also transported European cultural elements and some monumental misconceptions to what they called “The New World.” European visions of how to use the land were superimposed, often violently, upon earlier Native American traditions that were founded in very different notions about property ownership and the treatment of natural resources. While the Europeans celebrated their accomplishments in crossing the sea to conquer new lands, the original inhabitants of these lands viewed the arrival of the Europeans with dismay. Both cultures clashed in ways still felt by many in today’s world.

The recent conflict over the 400th anniversary of the Columbus voyage in 1492 exemplifies the power of historical events and their impact upon contemporary society. Some European Americans view Columbus as a heroic figure. Many Native Americans view him as a harbinger of disaster. In either case, the influence of maritime activity on human cultural interaction has been recognized as immense.

For ethnographer Dr. Victoria Patterson, the roots of conflict and cultural confrontation in American society run deep. Her involvement in the “Journey of the Frolic” project has provided her with an opportunity to point out that change and adjustment among those of different cultural backgrounds are fundamental features of the American experience. “It seems that we have identified cultural diversity and the conflicts it has wrought as a contemporary problem. In the United States and especially in California, we see this as a problem resulting from recent immigration. Yet, historically, the region of the Americas has always been culturally diverse, even before contact with European settlers occurred.

“In the area we now call California, for example, there were hundreds of distinct languages spoken by native peoples, and the California census from 1850 reveals an incredible variety of mixed backgrounds among the early non-native settlers. People came here



The brig “Frolic” under sail, with the red-white diamond flag of Augustine Heard & Co. flying from her main mast. Original illustration by S.F. Manning, used by permission of Tom Layton and S.F. Manning.

from all over the world, and they still do. Clearly, the cultural history of our state is based on cultural diversity. It’s an essential element of the culture we call ‘American,’ different cultures coming together with mixed cultural roots. Study of this history can help us understand that diversity itself is not a new issue and is not the cause of our problems.”

Patterson views the mixture of cultural backgrounds and perspectives as an asset, something that has been more a part of American success than it has been of American failure. She suggests that historians should revisit the past with some regularity to provide new approaches to the understanding of everyday life, even if that means revising the stories of our historical record. “As we re-investigate our cultural heritage, we create a rich revisionist history. By examining different perspectives we begin to see that they are just as important as more mainstream perspectives. This in turn helps us to see cultural diversity as a valuable asset rather than a problem,” she adds.

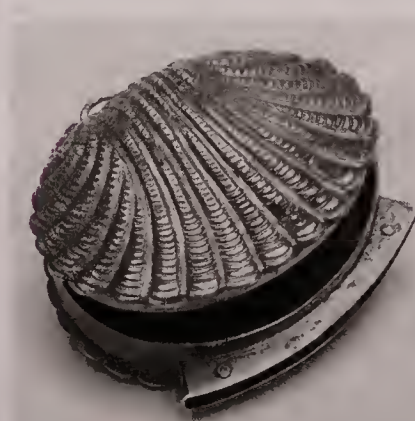
By its very nature, maritime history is characterized by the interaction of many cultures and the transmittal of ideas across oceans, lakes and rivers. Some of the most dramatic changes in world history have come as a result of the cultural interaction caused by people moving from one place to another in boats and ships. The commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the D-Day invasion is our culture’s most recent acknowledgement of this historical fact. The story told in the “Journey of the Frolic” project is not only a tale of the history of one particular ship, the *Frolic*, it also represents the many cultures that came into contact with one another because of the ship’s origins and its voyages to various points around the world.

“By examining the many cultures involved with the history of the *Frolic*, our current research project has illustrated that cultural diversity has, of course, played a major role in the development of the

United States. We have also learned that the history of cultural interaction can be used to understand current events in places like California, where issues of cultural interaction continue to shape everyday life,” says Patterson.

The project has identified about a dozen major cultural relationships represented by the ship, including connections between the cultures of the eastern United States and those of both India and China, as well as connections between the cultures of Native Americans in California and early settlers from Mexico, Europe and other regions of the world. It has also explored some of the personal histories of the people involved with the *Frolic* to show that the stories of the lives of real people can be extended to provide a window on world history.

For example, the *Frolic* was built in the Gardner Brothers shipyards in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1844. Several weeks after construction was completed, the *Frolic* set sail for India, passing the tip of South America on its way across the Pacific under the command of Captain Edward Horatio Faucon. He had been hired by Boston’s Augustine Heard & Co. as commander of their new opium trade ship and, upon arrival in India, Faucon began sailing the *Frolic* back and forth between China and India to transport Indian-produced opium to China in exchange for silver. As with many Americans,



Silver tinder box recovered from “Frolic” shipwreck. Photo by Tom Linden.

Faucon’s family background connects to Europe. His father was born in Haiti but grew up in Rouen, France, and came to America in 1804 on a journey from India. Edward was born in 1806, educated in Massachusetts and first came to California as a sea captain in the 1830s.

Through Faucon’s life, we touch several corners of the world and can observe relationships between different cultures involved with the commercial activity of his ship. In the 1840s the New England merchant culture of the American Northeast was advanced by using the technology developed by the ship-building culture of the city of Baltimore. Baltimore’s shipbuilders crafted some of the fastest sailing vessels ever built. Advanced sailing technology mixed with Yankee cultural values and concepts of profit, trade and free enterprise. This mixture of technology and business activity ensured financial success in the Far East for influential segments of American society. Paradoxically, the same culture that promoted freedom and democracy in some economic circumstances held other more complex values about forced labor and cultural superiority. These other cultural values supported a climate in which African Americans worked as slaves in the Baltimore shipyards. The African Americans worked alongside early immigrants from England and Ireland to produce the sailing ships that would be used to smuggle opium from India to China for the financial benefit of influential American businessmen.

As an example of the segment of African-American culture represented within the context of the ship’s story, *Frolic* archaeologist Dr. Thomas Layton discovered a rare glimpse of African-American life in the Baltimore shipyards as recalled by Fred Bailey, a former slave.

In 1836 eighteen-year-old Fred Bailey worked in the Gardner Brothers shipyard, the same yard where the *Frolic* was built in 1844. Late in life he recounted the story of his days at Gardner Brothers and said, “My orders from Mr. Gardner were to do whatever the carpenters commanded me to do. This was placing me at the beck and call of about 75 men. I was to regard all these as masters.”

At this time large numbers of young immigrants were coming to America from Ireland and England. Competition for jobs in the shipyards led to cultural confrontations between the new immigrants and older workers. Racial prejudice also contributed to a climate of cultural conflict at the shipyard and, in several instances, Bailey was attacked by his white co-workers. He never forgot his experiences in Baltimore, and they helped to influence his decision to escape slavery. Most students of American history already know that the African-American slave called “Fred Bailey” succeeded in his escape attempt, changed his

SHIPWRECK PROJECT

name to Frederick Douglass and became one of the most eloquent representatives of African-American rights in the fight for the abolition of slavery. Many years later, thinking of his own days as a slave in Baltimore, Douglass remarked, "No man can put a chain around the ankle of his fellow man without at last finding the other end fastened about his own neck." Douglass set the stage for additional cultural changes that continue to occupy American thoughts to the present day.

Another multicultural event from the extended story of the *Frolic* comes from the life of George Dixwell, one of the New England businessmen who worked in China to develop American enterprises for the company that owned the ship. After living in China for many years, Dixwell married Hoo Tsai-Shoon, described by Layton as "the educated daughter of a Shanghai commercial family." They had a son named Teen Seng, "Heaven Sent," whom his father re-named Charles Sargent, using the boy's New England grandmother's family name. The family later returned to the United States but most segments of American society did not accept the marriage of an American man to a Chinese woman and Hoo Tsai-Shoon soon returned to live permanently in China without her son or husband.

Patterson explains that as our culture becomes more familiar with the texture and detail of family and community history we can also become more understanding or



Chinese bowl recovered from "Frolic" shipwreck site in Mendocino County. Photo by Tom Linden.

tolerant of cultural differences as they affect cultural change. Our traditional view of "main event history," wars, political elections, the accomplishments of famous people, can become more personalized as we explore topics of human development that have affected our own families and local communities. As a result, Patterson suggests that all people are active participants in the history of humanity.

"There's a quote from Will Durant that says something to the effect that, in the past, historians have always looked at the river of history, but what's really important is the life going on along the river's banks," says Patterson. She asserts that it is this everyday "life along the river" that has defined what it really means to be part of the human experience.

By examining the history of the Frolic, we have also learned that the history of cultural interaction can be used to understand current events in places like California, where issues of cultural interaction continue to shape everyday life.

Individual interest in learning more about the past grows from different personal experiences and, for Patterson, early exposure to cultures different from her own produced a lifelong interest in anthropology. "Since I was a child, I have been fascinated by the diversity of life expressed in the world. I had a set of antique postcards showing different styles of dress from Germany, and I loved reading folk tales from around the world. I was fascinated by the choices people made in decorating themselves, in the kinds of music they listened to, in the foods they ate. I decided to major in medieval archaeology, and started taking classes at the University of Chicago, but was completely turned off by the narrow perspective of my professors. I decided to go into anthropology instead.

"This was in the late 1960s, and as a young person I was very concerned with the ethical considerations of my studies. There was lots of turmoil and unrest in Chicago resulting from such things as conflicts over national politics, the Civil Rights movement and the war in Vietnam. I came to feel that isolating myself in academic studies was selfish and useless. I decided to go into a pilot program in multicultural studies at the University of Chicago, and started teaching African-American studies in an inner-city school.

"After moving to California, I continued my interest in multicultural issues. I was the first Head Start teacher in Fort Bragg, and worked to create a multicultural curriculum in our schools. Later I moved to Ukiah where I directed the Ukiah Unified School District's Title VII Program, which at that time was the only Native American bilingual program in California.

"As I began to work with Native American kids, it became obvious that there was no curriculum at the school that dealt with Native American issues and perspectives. What started as a vague interest and an ethical concern for anthropology as an appropriate discipline for studying Third World cultures led me back into research, with a focus on working with Indian tribes on mutually-acceptable multicultural projects.

"Before the *Frolic* project came along, my interest had been very rooted in the history of the Americas. In looking at the transition

from American history to United States history, you begin to see the vital importance of pre-European settlement patterns in how our country has developed, and in how we have chosen to relate to our neighbors in Mexico. My study of the *Frolic* has led to a much more global emphasis. It offers an opportunity to look at what has gone on in a much larger geographic area, and has led to fascinating insights in what was going on around the world and how it related to specific events in Mendocino County history. For instance, by looking at how local Native Americans used items from the *Frolic*'s cargo and moved them to an inland village site, we also looked at pre-1850 trade by Native Americans in this area. It involved a surprising variety of trade goods and an incredibly broad geographic region. Trade was the way that people made connections, and trade items moved quickly from place to place.

"The *Frolic* project is interesting in its potential for exposing a variety of perspectives on a specific historical event and its consequences. What we have is a record of an event that had repercussions for many different groups of people, something that affected them all in different ways. It's fascinating to try to put it all together, like a mosaic, until you can begin to see the whole picture.



"Frolic" project ethnographer Dr. Victoria Patterson. Photo by Larry Melious, The Darkroom.

"People in today's world need to understand multicultural issues because they encounter them every day. You can see it in the way people have reacted to the North American Free Trade Agreement, or when you look at who's lined up in front of the food bank, or in the reaction against the threat of losing jobs to recent immigrants. What we experience today isn't new. It's an echo of what our parents and grandparents felt, perhaps from a different perspective or in response to a different set of circumstances.

"By studying these issues we gain a more complete view of how we find and place ourselves in our own time, and how we can make better sense of what is happening to us and to our society today. We can create an environment of safety and empowerment, instead of fear and distrust, by getting to know our neighbors and their history on a more personal level.

"Once you do that, you may find that a lot of the fears and stereotypes you hold are, in fact, unfounded. Working together, we can make sense of our lives and create the kinds of communities that we want to live in."

VOICES FROM THE FROLIC AND BEYOND



The cast of "Voices of the Frolic and Beyond" from the Ukiah Players Theatre. A CCH-supported project related to the "Journey of the Frolic" exhibitions, "Voices" presents chautauqua-style dramatizations of regional characters whose lives were shaped by the 1850 wreck of the "Frolic." Photo by Evan Johnson. Also see calendar listings on page 6.

"HUMANITIES AND THE NEW MEDIA" EXCERPTS FROM WORKS

HELD AT ANNENBERG SCHOOL FOR COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
JUNE 9 & 10, 1994

Like other Californians, we at the California Council for the Humanities have been hearing amazing predictions concerning communications technologies: the coming of 500 cable channels, video on demand, CD-ROM, multimedia, interactivity.

And as an organization dedicated to bringing the humanities to the public—often by supporting humanities programming distributed through radio and broadcast and cable television—we feel a special obligation to understand this expanding world of media possibilities.

In the rapidly changing field of multimedia, however, there are no authoritative guides to turn to. So CCH invited thoughtful people from a variety of fields to advise us on the current state of affairs, future prospects and what the implications are for funders.

The panelists included filmmakers, TV station managers, humanities scholars, distributors, and multimedia practitioners. The conversation turned out to be a rich weave of advice and questions for the Council to consider. I can't anticipate the lessons the Council will learn from this conversation, but the filaments and threads excerpted below provide a sampler of what we heard.

I hope those of you interested in more will send for the edited transcript (see ordering information on the following page), and then send us your own concepts. That's the kind of interactivity the Council encourages, whether the media are old or new.

Sincerely,

Jim Quay

THREE FILAMENTS FROM WORKSHOP ONE

DISTRIBUTION DISASTER

What's happening in our distribution area is critically important for the Council to understand. The educational market—selling moving image media to schools, libraries and colleges—is in absolute disarray. It's a disaster. We are in a major, major depression. Companies are collapsing, the market is collapsing, and if you look closely, you'll see that teachers and media buyers are really confused about product and product pricing. There's no way for a media buyer, a school teacher, to have an effective way to evaluate videos or, for that matter, to have budgets to buy videos at all.

Mitchell Block, Direct Cinema Ltd.

IMPATIENT AUDIENCES

Audiences are considerably more impatient. Nielsen measurements show them wandering around minute by minute by minute by minute. In the middle 1980s the remote control became dominant. That meant that public television numbers started oscillating much more, because you had to stick for 15 seconds before the Nielsen computer would register you as a number. Public television used to show up in the numbers because people literally had to walk up to the television set and turn the dial in order to change it. With remote control, nobody stayed long enough to figure out this thing that took a little bit more explanation and a little bit more time to understand.

Stephen Kulczycki, KCET-TV, L.A.

WHY DO WE REALLY WATCH?

I wonder if people really turn on TV to get information. I wonder if they're not turning on TV to see what's human and relational there that can speak to them. I mean, what's this business of all these incredible talk shows where everybody constantly reviews every possible layer and there's really nothing there at all? Another layer or there's really nothing there at all? Why do people watch that? Maybe it has to do with looking for some secret about another person, some relationship that can speak to them, assuage their loneliness. I don't know what it all is about, but I don't think they're looking for information. I think we make a great mistake if we think the thing to do is put more information out there, better conceived, more slickly presented, more fast-moving so they won't get bored. I think people are looking for something else in TV.

Loni Ding, Independent Filmmaker

DR:
I'd like to go back to this problem of public humanities. The issue we're really facing is not about CD-ROMs or about cable; it's about a shift from traditional notions of written literacy to image-based symbolic forms of communication—a sort of return to hieroglyphia. Go to Burger King and look at the key pads that people use on cash registers. Go to mail order houses and look at what employees use to take in orders. They're no longer writing sentences; it's all image based. This is what's at stake. It's the redefinition of how we communicate. ... The question for you to ask as "humanists" is whether you're going to stay bound to a certain notion of discourse based upon the printed word. Because that's the command structure this whole society is based upon, a shrinking population having that "linear cultural agenda."

DR:
He probably will, but the point is that the universe that he's going to be dealing with will be shrinking to a small part of the population—the command group that runs the society. The rest of the population will be de-skilled. That's the sort of conspiracy we're courting.

MB:
I do. If we all had, by constitutional right, life, liberty and a fiberoptic link into our homes, then Mary Bitterman's channel would be accessible to anyone on the face of the earth, as would my channel. And in a sense what would happen is this wonderful kind of decentralization of content, where anyone anywhere could tie into content instantaneously. ... As soon as the information can be freely transmitted through an Internet-like structure, then everyone is sort of a player. It's very democratic. But as long as the Internet is controlled by the allocation of scarce channels through these large cable companies, 60-channel undertakings, 500-channels, then it won't be democratic because there will always be gatekeepers.

JK:
Jay?

JB:
I really disagree. I do not think that people are disempowered by being given a lot of information. Committees are disempowered by being given lots of largely irrelevant information that they have little way of processing. No one has ever suffered, died, or become seriously ill from having too much information, I guarantee you.

JB:
That's absolutely right, but that's a very important distinction. The skill to use information is the difference between your elementary school having a good library that you don't know how to use as opposed to that library having only three books. It is not information that disempowers.

MM:
How do we make it able to be done by not just white males? This is a very real concern. I bring up again the fact that video cameras are not just being used by white men anymore. Video is an empowering technology that is in the hands of lots of people. Is it the job of the Council to make interactive multimedia as available as videotapes, as accessible, as sort of free to the world to produce with? The answer, of course, is no. First it's not your job and, second, you won't be as quick at it as the market will be anyways. It's already happening. Anybody who wants to do this can go into any Crown Books, any Barnes and Noble, anywhere in the country and pick up a book on MacroMind Director, regardless of what socio-economic strata they come from. And the tools will get easier—not in the space of decades, but in the space of months.



JK:
So you're also concerned about the "WEs" and about the fact that Louise [Krasniewicz] has a sister who works at the Burger King and the fact that Louise can converse in multiple languages. She can do the job of her sister, but not vice-versa. Or, to take it into academia, people like Jay Mechling must be wondering if he's going to be able to hang on, to control the discourse of American studies.

JK:
Mitchell, did you want to add to that?

JM:
Let's imagine that every American home or every American actually has the technology—everybody has a terminal and so on and so forth. Because there's kind of an American thing going on here that has to do with choice and individualism—the sense that if you connect with an individual and you have choice, you have therefore accomplished freedom and control over your life. I can tell you that in the university and I'm sure in a lot of organizations, one of the ways in which you can absolutely disempower a committee is by giving it lots of information, lots of undigested, uninterpreted information. So equating having access to information with having control over one's life is, to me, a kind of a dangerous notion. So ...I see this total democracy as maybe not getting us anywhere closer to the social justice and other sorts of things people were referring to.

LK:
No, but they've suffered from not having the skills to know how to deal with it, and that's what we're talking about.

LK:
Then one of the things we're talking about is how do we get these skills to people in order to empower them. One of the ways is to come up with new approaches to both the creation of media and the dissemination of it—because when people see new media programs, they often want to create them. ... So one of the questions I have for the Council is at what point do you stop funding programs and start training people to create these new formats? To me that's an interesting question because it brings up this whole question of who will be able to create programs in the future. And with the new media, it's doesn't necessarily have to be the same people.

JK:
Even the young lady who works at the Burger King?

JK:
Your sister, who is not into sentences. She, in particular, would be drawn to this. This language, this anti-text...

JK:
So things will become even more set in concrete. The sort of vision that Rosen has, and Peter Pennekamp, of the class structure.

FG:
By the time her sister may get access to that in five years, you're going to be doing something that's light years away from what you're doing now. That's the lag that we're talking about—that there's always this edge here and, then, while the gap's being narrowed, the ones that are catching up are not catching up with those who are going far ahead and way beyond.

MM:
Right. But community is very different from games. If you can establish a community so people can talk, using these advanced technological mechanisms, that effectively just goes around the whole gaming issue.

MS:
I want to get back to this issue of games as a model or non-model because yesterday Louise talked about learning centers in shopping centers and airports. As I see it, Maclen and David are saying some really interesting things about the format and shape of the information that has everything to do with the way we present humanities programs. I just want to know a little more about the way games engage people—especially if we're interested in educational effectiveness. When I look at a lot of the educational interactive software created, say, in museums, it seems unbelievably slow and unbelievably plodding; it seems unbelievably simplistic to me. I was just at the art museum directors meeting in Seattle and I saw a lot of things that were developed—some of it better than others—but what was missing from that conference in Seattle were more commercial vendors from whom we could, perhaps, benchmark—not content necessarily, not mindless hypnotism in front of these units, but ways in which we could stimulate and engage people with our messages. When I say our messages, I mean analysis, depth, insight, complexity, you know, gray, rather than just the black and white.

DJ:
Let me interject here. Because I don't trust the Department of Commerce to place humanities on their screen when they're talking about the national information infrastructure. It's only business concerns. So where is the California Council for the Humanities in dialogue with the Department of Commerce, and within that, say, who is the Council talking to in Sacramento? There's a political urgency that CCH become an advocacy organization that somehow is going to take the position that the humanities must be on the table in the discussion.

PARTICIPANTS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

DR - David Rosen, managing director, Praxis
JK - Jim Kennedy, Session Moderator
MB - Mitchell Block, president, Direct Cinema, Ltd.
JM - Jay Mechling, chair, CCH
JB - James Beniger, associate professor, Annenberg School for Communication, USC
LK - Louise Krasniewicz, research associate, department of anthropology, UCLA

MM - Maclen Marvit, multimedia producer, Knowledge Adventure
FG - Felix Gutierrez, executive director, Freedom Forum
IA - Isabel Alegria, CCH member
MS - Marsha Semmel, director, division of general programs, NEH
DJ - David Jensen, senior project associate, Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities

THE NEW MEDIA CONFERENCE”

RPTS FROM WORKSHOPS

HELD AT ANNENBERG SCHOOL FOR COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
JUNE 9 & 10, 1994

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUNDERS (BRANCHES FROM WORKSHOP 3)

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

(AND WHO WILL WE BE
TAKING ALONG?)

A CONVERSATIONAL
THREAD FROM WORKSHOP 2

JK:
So you're also concerned about the "WEs" and about the fact that Louise [Krasniewicz] has a sister who works at the Burger King and the fact that Louise can converse in multiple languages. She can do the job of her sister, but not vice-versa. Or, to take it into academia, people like Jay Mechling must be wondering if he's going to be able to hang on, to control the discourse of American studies.

JK:
Mitchell, did you want to add to that?

JM:
Let's imagine that every American home or every American actually has the technology—everybody has a terminal and so on and so forth. Because there's kind of an American thing going on here that has to do with choice and individualism—the sense that if you connect with an individual and you have choice, you have therefore accomplished freedom and control over your life. I can tell you that in the university and I'm sure in a lot of organizations, one of the ways in which you can absolutely disempower a committee is by giving it lots of information, lots of undigested, uninterpreted information. So equating having access to information with having control over one's life is, to me, a kind of a dangerous notion. So ...I see this total democracy as maybe not getting us anywhere closer to the social justice and other sorts of things people were referring to.

LK:
No, but they've suffered from not having the skills to know how to deal with it, and that's what we're talking about.

LK:
Then one of the things we're talking about is how do we get these skills to people in order to empower them. One of the ways is to come up with new approaches to both the creation of media and the dissemination of it—because when people see new media programs, they often want to create them. ... So one of the questions I have for the Council is at what point do you stop funding programs and start training people to create these new formats? To me that's an interesting question because it brings up this whole question of who will be able to create programs in the future. And with the new media, it's doesn't necessarily have to be the same people.

JK:
Even the young lady who works at the Burger King?

JK:
Your sister, who is not into sentences. She, in particular, would be drawn to this. This language, this anti-text...

JK:
So things will become even more set in concrete. The sort of vision that Rosen has, and Peter Pennekamp, of the class structure.

FG:
By the time her sister may get access to that in five years, you're going to be doing something that's light years away from what you're doing now. That's the lag that we're talking about—that there's always this edge here and, then, while the gap's being narrowed, the ones that are catching up are not catching up with those who are going far ahead and way beyond.

MM:
Right. But community is very different from games. If you can establish a community so people can talk, using these advanced technological mechanisms, that effectively just goes around the whole gaming issue.

MS:
I want to get back to this issue of games as a model or non-model because yesterday Louise talked about learning centers in shopping centers and airports. As I see it, Maclen and David are saying some really interesting things about the format and shape of the information that has everything to do with the way we present humanities programs. I just want to know a little more about the way games engage people—especially if we're interested in educational effectiveness. When I look at a lot of the educational interactive software created, say, in museums, it seems unbelievably slow and unbelievably plodding; it seems unbelievably simplistic to me. I was just at the art museum directors meeting in Seattle and I saw a lot of things that were developed—some of it better than others—but what was missing from that conference in Seattle were more commercial vendors from whom we could, perhaps, benchmark—not content necessarily, not mindless hypnotism in front of these units, but ways in which we could stimulate and engage people with our messages. When I say our messages, I mean analysis, depth, insight, complexity, you know, gray, rather than just the black and white.

DJ:
Let me interject here. Because I don't trust the Department of Commerce to place humanities on their screen when they're talking about the national information infrastructure. It's only business concerns. So where is the California Council for the Humanities in dialogue with the Department of Commerce, and within that, say, who is the Council talking to in Sacramento? There's a political urgency that CCH become an advocacy organization that somehow is going to take the position that the humanities must be on the table in the discussion.

LK:
...My sister...

MM:
There are facilities being put out that are pre-verbal to put together stories. Totally image-based. I know this is true because I've seen them. It will be more true in six months. It will be totally ubiquitous, I would argue, within five years.

MM:
No, because little kids—regardless of economic strata—can do it like they can do videotapes.

IA:
And meanwhile, we have more incidents of what happened, for example, with video games. One of the elements of the equation I think we haven't talked a lot about is the desire of the marketplace to sell those things. I mean, for most of our little kids, our nieces and nephews, their first encounter is with the games.

IA:
Yeah, but the masses of people that we're talking about are disenfranchised from this, because they're being sold a "thing." It's because they're being treated as a market, not as a group of people who have communication and information needs and desires. They're being treated purely as buyers. So what is the next way to narrow the gap so that technology is used in a way that helps them use information?

JK:
So, are we buying into the idea that the emerging technology is merely going to guarantee that there is always going to be a group of people who will be the analyzers, the depth people, the humanities crazies, if you will, and that that group is shrinking? Or, is there something we can do to continue to work the insights of the humanities and not continue the isolation of the academy from the community? Friends, last night and today we have described a hell of a lot of problems and I don't really want to wait until this afternoon to begin to formulate possible plans. Let's start by not bemoaning and wringing our hands. Let's start by trying to frame some ways in which the humanities will live and thrive and not just get piddled away.

Is it possible that the documentary film is a dying medium? ... Congress stopped giving money to the tobacco industry; maybe we should stop giving money to filmmakers of documentary films. ... We know what our priorities are, but we want to be shaken up a bit. (Jay Mechling, CCH)

Technology will not make us do better things. Technology will simply let us do what we do better. ... I think it would be unfortunate, therefore, if funders were to be distracted by new technology from where I see the real problem in developing alternative uses of the media lies, which is audience. (Lawrence Daressa, CA Newsreel)

The first thing I think we need to do is get our staff comfortable with the changes of the new technology, or least get them a little bit more up to speed (Marsha Semmel, NEH)

How about funding joint projects, where the filmmaker and the humanists are all people from a particular community? It means getting rid of the old notions that we have to tell the story of the Donner party one more time. ... There's some way in which having the people who are the subjects [shape the project] without necessarily a sense of closure—the idea that says a community adds up to this or to that—opens the thing up and shows that there are many stories to be told. (Robert Rosenstone, CalTech)

Given our resources, I think we have to ... think in terms of resources that are already out there. With some of these new technologies right now, we have to think of how we can best repackage some of these wonderful films, museum exhibitions, to take advantage of the best that's already there. (Marie Kelley, Council Member)

One way [to build on your own strengths] that would be helpful and not too difficult is to get connected electronically. Start having some kind of bulletin board in which humanists can connect with you and you can find out what people are working on so that you start building up your own database and you know what your stakeholders' needs are. (Debra Franco, Copperfield Associates, Inc.)

You make about \$400,000 a year in grants, which is about the same as it costs to make one CD. I think we have to put all of this in perspective. My recommendation to the Council would be to continue doing what you're doing and supporting the kind of work that you've been supporting in that niche you've created. (David Jensen, Getty Center)

It's good to remember that our regrant budget is equivalent to one good CD. Maybe one of the most important things that we can do is to figure out what this leadership role is for us. (Jay Mechling)

I just have a technical thing to add, which is that a CD-ROM doesn't cost \$400,000; we should get that figure out of our heads quickly. But it does suggest that the Council needs to get some practical information about what it costs to produce certain kinds of media and at what level. (Louise Krasniewicz, UCLA)

I think the advice that CCH is getting is the advice that Yogi Berra gave, which is, "when you come to a fork in the road, take it." (Jim Quay, Moderator)

I speak as a producer. I've been receiving grants from CCH for about 15 years, and I wouldn't have a career were it not for CCH. ... One thing CCH could do is address the need to somehow improve, solidify, give longevity to the field. The strains that producers work under today are extreme and that's why people fall by the wayside. (Stephen Fisher, Ind. Producer)

ORDERING INFORMATION

For a copy of the 60-page edited transcript of the "Humanities and the New Media" conference, send a check or money order for \$8.50 (includes first class postage) to the California Council for the Humanities, 312 Sutter Street, Suite 601, San Francisco, CA 94108. ATTN: Media Transcripts.

PARTICIPANTS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

DR - David Rosen, managing director, Praxis
JK - Jim Kennedy, Session Moderator
MB - Mitchell Block, president, Direct Cinema, Ltd.
JM - Jay Mechling, chair, CCH
JB - James Beniger, associate professor, Annenberg School for Communication, USC
LK - Louise Krasniewicz, research associate, department of anthropology, UCLA

MM - Maclen Marvii, multimedia producer, Knowledge Adventure
FG - Felix Gutierrez, executive director, Freedom Forum
IA - Isabel Alegria, CCH member
MS - Marsha Semmel, director, division of general programs, NEH
DJ - David Jensen, senior project associate, Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities

Calendar of Humanities Events

The public humanities programs listed here received funding support from the California Council for the Humanities. Please note that dates and times should be confirmed with local sponsors. These listings are often provided to the Council well before final arrangements are made.

EXHIBITS

- Through Dec. 31** In complementary exhibits in Mendocino, Willits and Ukiah, the **"Journey of the Frolic"** project explores the effects an 1850 shipwreck off the Mendocino coast continues to have. At Kelley House Museum, 45007 Albion Street, Mendocino; Mendocino County Museum, 400 E. Commercial St., Willits; and Grace Hudson Museum, 431 S. Main, Ukiah. For information, call 707/459-2736.
- Through Jan. 3** **"Irangeles: Iranians in Los Angeles"** is a photographic exhibition exploring the Iranian immigrant experience and themes of displacement, class, politics, gender and religion. At the Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, UC Berkeley. For information, call 510/642-8208.
- Dec. 4 - Jan. 15** **"No Laughing Matter: Political Cartoonists on the Environment"** is a CERA-sponsored SITES exhibit of more than 150 images by cartoonists from 30 countries exploring how politically inspired art shapes awareness and concern for the natural environment. At the Museum of History and Art, 225 S. Euclid Ave., Ontario. 909/983-3198.
- Dec. 15 - Jan. 20** **"Faces of Destiny: Photographs from the 1898 Indian Congress in Omaha"** is a CERA-sponsored exhibit of images from an extraordinary gathering of Native Americans at the end of the last century. At Victor Valley Museum, 11873 Apple Valley Rd., Apple Valley. 619/240-2111.
- Dec. 15 - Feb. 25** **"Woven Vessels"** is a CERA-sponsored exhibit exploring the multicultural traditions of basketmaking and the evolution of the basket into non-traditional contemporary forms. At Corona Public Library Heritage Room, 650 S. Main, Corona. 909/736-2386.

EVENTS

- Nov. 1** **"Performing Identities: The Place of Expression in the Age of Madonna"** is a lecture by Michael Davidson, professor of literature at UCSD. The program is part of the "Border Voices" project's "New Voices in the Humanities" lecture series. 7 p.m. At Scripps Ranch High School, 10410 Treena St., San Diego. 619/621-9020 for information.
- Nov. 4 & 18** **"Voices From the Frolic and Beyond"** are chautauqua-style performances related to the "Journey of the Frolic" project exhibitions. 10 a.m. At the Grace Hudson Museum, 431 S. Main, Ukiah. For information, call Ukiah Players Theatre, 707/462-1210.

- Nov. 5** **"The Flesh"** is the second of three discussions among prominent scientists, humanists and science fiction writers in "The World, the Flesh and the Devil" series. Held simultaneously at the ALZA Corporation in Palo Alto and at The Scripps Institute in La Jolla. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. To register, write George Slusser, Eaton Program Director, UC Riverside Rivera Library, PO Box 5900, Riverside, CA 92517, ATTN: W/F/D Series.
- Nov. 6** **"F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Cinematic Approach to Fiction Writing"** is a lecture by Marilyn Elkins, assistant professor of English, CSU Los Angeles. 11 a.m. L.A. County Museum of Art Courtyard. Contact the L.A. Cultural Affairs Dept. at 213/485-2433.
- Nov. 15** **"Gallery Talk: Irangeles"** is a lecture on cultural issues facing the Iranian community in California by Jaleh Pirnazar, professor of Near Eastern studies at UC Berkeley. Noon. At the Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, UC Berkeley. For information, call 510/642-8208.
- Nov. 19** **"Voices from the Frolic Teachers' Workshop"** features Sally Roesch Wagner, who will focus on how to integrate research and development of historical characterization into the teaching of arts and humanities subjects. For more information, call Ukiah Players Theatre, 707/462-1210.
- Nov. 19** **"American Masters: Georgia O'Keefe"** is a lecture/discussion led by Jan Thompson of San Jose State University and presented in conjunction with the "American Art: 1900-1940" exhibit. At 3 p.m. San Jose Museum of Art, 110 S. Market St. 408/294-2787.
- Nov. 19** **"The Devil"** is the third and final discussion among prominent scientists, humanists and science fiction writers in "The World, the Flesh and the Devil" series. Held simultaneously at the ALZA Corporation in Palo Alto and at The Scripps Institute in La Jolla. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. To register, write George Slusser, Eaton Program Director, UC Riverside Rivera Library, PO Box 5900, Riverside, CA 92517, ATTN: W/F/D Series.
- Dec. 4** **"Here I Have the Feeling I am Francis of Assisi in an Aquarium"** is a lecture about German-speaking emigre authors in L.A. by Cornelius Schnauber, director of the Max Kade Institute for Austrian-Swiss-German Studies at USC. 11 a.m. At Farmers Market, Art Gallery, West Patio. Contact the L.A. Cultural Affairs Dept. at 213/485-2433.
- Dec. 6** **"Symbolic Significance of Rice in Japanese Culture"** is a lecture by Dan Whitney, professor of anthropology at SDSU. The program is part of the "Border Voices" project's "New Voices in the Humanities" lecture series. 7 p.m. At Scripps Ranch High School, 10410 Treena St., San Diego. 619/621-9020 for information.
- Jan. 10** **"Narratives of American Law: Outsider Jurisprudence and Eudora Welty's (Extra) Legal Vision"** is a lecture by Eve Kornfeld, professor of history at SDSU. The program is part of the "Border Voices" project's "New Voices in the Humanities" lecture series. 7 p.m. At Scripps Ranch High School, 10410 Treena St., San Diego. 619/621-9020 for information.

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION *Continued*

occurrences, seemingly *natural* phenomena obeying laws beyond human determination. Comprehending the step-by-step process through which a "good idea" becomes a technology, a commercially available product or service (and especially the bottom-line requirements that must be met), puts an end to any naive notion that technology is natural or neutral.

Technology is an embodied form of what is called "instrumental" reason, a mode of purposeful thought and practice that fosters mastery of not only the natural world, but the human world as well. In the totality of its progres-

sive and regressive aspects, technology is an instrument facilitating the ever-increasing rationalization of both production and distribution, of manufacturing and consumption, and of social relations – social power – mediated through the marketplace.

Humanists can help re-situate the general discussion on technology through a careful critique of the pseudo-scientific categories that underlie much of the discussion taking place in academia, the media and the arts. They can also help recall the social history of technology over the last century, especially that of the communications media,

as a way to measure its accomplishments against the original promise, and thus make the promise accountable to those who have inherited its historic consequences.

The U.S. is an insular country and Americans often lack meaningful comparisons against which to evaluate, judge, their lives. The print and television media ceaselessly portray the United States as the "best" country in the world, systematically excluding meaningful comparisons to other, and especially "First World," nations. They foster a mythology of technological progress that distorts the past into either a "paradise" of

simpler times or a world purposefully evolving into today's and tomorrow's possibilities.

Humanists can help reconceptualize this outlook by reminding people that the present could have been otherwise. They can anchor the discussion of technology in a perspective that neither denies nor fictionalizes its past – thus providing an approach that strips the present of a false inevitability and makes technology at once the realization of human practice and fully accountable to human society.

Humanities News

Next Council Meeting Date and Time

The California Council for the Humanities' quarterly meeting will be held at the Los Angeles Airport Marriott, 5855 West Century Boulevard on Friday, December 9, 1994. The session is scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m. and adjourn by 5 p.m.

Council Joins the Internet

On October 1, the Council began a trial use of e-mail in some of its communications. Brief requests for information or for grant guidelines, newsletters or other publications can be sent to the Council via e-mail at the following address: cch@netcom.com Please note that the Council cannot accept grant proposals or respond to detailed queries via e-mail. In the near future, the Council plans to make grant guidelines and monthly calendars of Council-sponsored exhibits and events available via anonymous ftp or through a gopher space. Look for additional information in the next issue (Winter 1995) of *Humanities Network*.

NEH Launches BBS

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has established its own electronic bulletin board system (BBS) as a way of increasing public access to NEH program information. The system can be used to access NEH guidelines, deadlines and grant information, recent awards lists, humanities events and grant recipient information. Later in the year, the BBS will also include information about state humanities councils' grants and programs. To access the system, a user needs a computer with a modem. The BBS is available at 202/606-8688 (with an 8-N-1 modem configuration). Connection to the Internet or a commercial network is not necessary. For questions about accessing the BBS, call 202/606-8400.

Humanities à la Carte Coordinator Joins Council Staff

The Council has hired Dr. Judith E. Haut as Humanities à la Carte (HALC) coordinator. HALC is a Council initiative to bring lunch-hour humanities programming to the workplace. Haut will work from the Los Angeles office to disseminate HALC throughout the Los Angeles area. Haut holds a B.A. in English from UC Berkeley and an M.A. and Ph.D. in folklore and child development from UCLA. Before joining the Council staff she worked as a professor and faculty advisor at the Union Institute in Los Angeles.

New Benefits for "Friends of the Humanities"

Videotapes of award-winning documentary films produced with support from the California Council for the Humanities are among the new benefits available to people who join "Friends of the Humanities," the group of individuals who support the Council with their financial contributions large and small. "The Donner Party," "Common Threads" and "Wild By Law" are the films the Council has chosen to give donors a first-hand experience of the kind of programs their contributions help support. *Humanities Network* readers will find an invitation coupon at the bottom of this page describing these and other new membership benefits in more detail. In addition, this fall the Council will send the first direct mail invitation in its history to a select group of Californians. The goal: 300 new Friends of the Humanities by year end to help support the expanded array of programs the Council now conducts.

The Council is grateful to these donors for their gifts and grants (recorded December 17, 1993 to September 23, 1994).

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Philip M. Klauber, San Diego in support of the *Searching for San Diego* project.

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CALIFORNIA COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES

The California Council for the Humanities is a partnership of public and academic life whose purpose is to invite all Californians to a lifelong exploration of the cultures, the stories, and the values that constitute our most vital inheritance.

Since its creation in 1975, the Council has awarded more than \$12 million to more than 1300 nonprofit organizations, enabling them to produce exhibits, films and radio programs, and lecture series and conferences on topics of significance to Californians.

The Council also serves Californians with projects of its own. These include the national dissemination of a Scholars in the Schools program; publications distributed to libraries, scholars and the public; coordination and support of local and statewide coalitions; and, in 1994, a community project in San Diego, a Motherhead pilot project in Los Angeles, a chautauqua tour commemorating Thomas Jefferson's 250th birthday, and a ten-city cultural diversity program series presented by the Smithsonian Institution.

The Council is the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities and is supported by grants from NEH, corporations and foundations, and by contributions from individuals. An independent, not-for-profit organization, the Council receives no state funds.

Major grant proposals are accepted on April 1 and October 1. Proposal planning grant requests, minigrant requests, and film-and-speaker minigrant requests may be submitted at any time. Interested nonprofit organizations should request a free copy of the updated 1992-1993 Guide to the Grant Program from the San Francisco office.

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NEXT PROPOSAL DEADLINE: April 1, 1995

Proposals must conform to the updated 1992-1993 Guide to Grant Programs. Send 15 copies to the San Francisco office by the due date.

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